

The Seoul Declaration

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUBREGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA, HELD IN SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, 1-4 DECEMBER 1999

The participants of the Subregional Training Workshop on Human Rights Education in Northeast Asia, including education policymakers, officers responsible for teacher-training institutions and for education faculties of universities, materials, and curriculum developers, and members of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other national institutions and organizations active in the area of human rights education in schools from China, Japan, Mongolia, and Republic of Korea,

CONSIDERING THAT

The United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), proclaimed in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), has provided governments, international organizations, NGOs, professional associations, and all other sectors of civil society with a common strategy in worldwide efforts for human rights education, training, and public information;

The Framework for Regional Technical Cooperation adopted by consensus in the Sixth Workshop on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian and Pacific Region (Teheran 1998), and reaffirmed in the 1999 New Delhi Workshop, identified human rights education as one of the four key priorities for regional cooperation;

Human rights education in the formal education system, in conjunction with non-formal human rights education, is an important part of an overall national human rights educational strategy;

During the past two years, various human rights education partners have been discussing ways and means to advance human rights

education within the Asia-Pacific region, including the UNESCO-sponsored Asia and Pacific Conference on Education for Human Rights in Asia and the Pacific (Pune, India, February 1999), which gathered representatives of governments, national institutions, NGOs, and individual experts from approximately 20 countries;

Various countries in the Asia-Pacific region have undertaken significant steps toward the incorporation of human rights education in the school system, providing a wealth of experience on the development of teaching materials, methodologies, and curricular and extra-curricular activities;

MET IN ORDER TO

Share experiences and lessons learnt from the region; discuss challenges, opportunities, and obstacles in pursuing human rights education programs in Northeast Asian schools; compare methodologies; and explore various courses of action needed in order to develop and/or strengthen such programs,

AND AGREED ON THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the changing social, political, and economic conditions brought about by democratization and development of economies in the subregion, there is a growing interest and a conducive environment for human rights education in schools

While there are different country specificities, the need for and commitment to human rights education are equally recognized

In the subregion there is a common understanding that human rights education in schools is based on universally accepted human rights standards and relevant national education policies and legislation. Human rights education—an effective tool to prevent human rights violations—should be understood to cover the whole range of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights; the right to development; as well as those of vulnerable groups. Related responsibilities are equally emphasized.

In addition, there is a consensus on the fact that those norms should be made relevant to the daily lives of the learners.

Participatory and learner-centered methodologies are considered effective for human rights education programs.

Human rights education programs in schools are developed and implemented through the efforts of various institutions and individuals (Ministries of Education, local authorities, universities, research institutes, teachers, students and parents, NGOs, etc.), who constitute the stakeholders of human rights education.

Human rights education programs in schools are developed in consideration of different cultural contexts and stages of development of the country. In this light, traditional values and beliefs which are related to the protection and the promotion of human rights can be employed in developing human rights education programs.

Planned education development and reform in the subregion provides the appropriate en-

vironment for the development and adoption of human rights education programs within the formal education system.

Regional training centres such as the Asia-Pacific Regional Centre of Education for International Understanding (associate centre of UNESCO) provide opportunities for training educators in human rights.

1. Training of teachers and other education personnel

- Teachers' education institutions do not provide separate courses in human rights and human rights education methodologies. Those topics are usually integrated in other courses (social sciences, for example), but not in a systematic or adequate manner.
- In-service human rights training for teachers is likewise sporadic and inadequate.
- While there is quite a range of materials for use in the classrooms, training materials for teachers are highly insufficient.

2. Curriculum development and extracurricular activities

- Human rights are not systematically covered in existing curriculums, even though all countries have developed some human rights education materials.
- Human rights do not constitute a separate subject, but are generally integrated into specific subjects (social studies, civics, history, legal education, moral education, etc.). In this context, however, human rights are not sufficiently dealt with.
- Extracurricular activities are an important contribution to making human rights education a living experience.

3. Policy issues

- Human rights are generally supported by national legislation which provides a basis for human rights education. However, this legislation lacks specific details to sys-

tematically implement human rights education programs in schools.

- Government financial allocation for human rights education is not adequate.
- Some countries have adopted a decentralized system of education which allows schools to develop their own human rights education programs.

4. Human rights education in the classroom

- Multi-method programs—including use of videos, dramatization, games, street theater, role plays, music, art/drawing, television—enhance teaching of human rights in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

Human rights education should be consistent with the principles and articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to promote children's well-being and best interests and to protect them from any risk of abuse.

Adequate financial allocation should be made for human rights education programs at the international, regional, and national levels.

Cooperation at the international, regional, and national levels should be enhanced, in the form of workshops, bilateral exchanges, surveys, teacher-training exchange, educators' networks and information sharing to enhance, among others, common understanding of human rights education.

The meaningful involvement of NGOs at all levels in the design, implementation, and evaluation of human rights education activities should be enhanced to maximize the use of their experience, and cooperation between governmental and nongovernmental players should be improved in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Parents should be fully involved in human rights education programs in schools, both as learners and as educators.

Research in all aspects of human rights education in schools should be undertaken. Education research institutions should be established or strengthened.

The implementation of all recommendations should constitute part of a comprehensive (in terms of outreach), effective (in terms of educational strategies), and sustainable (over the long term) national strategy under a national action plan for human rights education, in accordance with the United Nations Guidelines for National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education.

The midterm review of progress made at the international, regional, national, and local levels toward achieving the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), envisaged for the year 2000, should include existing initiatives in the subregion and should give impetus to human rights education programs in schools.

The Seoul Workshop results should be brought to the attention of the participants in the Inter-Sessional Workshop on National Plans of Action for Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region which will be held in Japan at the beginning of the year 2000.

Governments in the subregion are urged to consider the assistance in the development and implementation of human rights education programs available under the United Nations Technical Cooperation Programme in the Field of Human Rights, administered by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Participants and observers should disseminate through their networks the results of the workshop, which could be useful to partners in other countries willing to engage in similar efforts.

1. Training of teachers and other education personnel

- Teacher training should aim at increasing knowledge on human rights, developing skills in the use of participatory and cre-

ative methodologies, and enhancing motivation to teach human rights.

- Appropriate and adequate pre- and in-service human rights curriculums and user-friendly material for teachers should be developed.
- Human rights training programs should include human rights issues related to the teachers and to the family life of the students.
- In view of their multiplier effect, train-the-trainers courses should be organized.
- In-service training should be compulsory and be given credit, where appropriate, and should be provided at basic, intermediate, and advanced levels in order to meet the different needs of the teachers.
- Teacher-training institutes and/or training courses on human rights education should be established.

2. Curriculum development and extracurricular activities

- Curriculum development should be an all-inclusive process involving teachers, human rights experts, educationalists, parents, students, representatives of NGOs, school governance, etc.
- Curriculum development should be an on-going process subject to piloting, review, evaluation, and revision.
- Human rights education should be infused into all levels of education.
- Extracurricular activities should be organized within and for the benefit of the

community and the family. They could include field visits, interaction programs with other schools, camps, festivals, etc.

3. Policy issues

- Appropriate laws and regulations which support human rights education in schools should be enacted which, among others, allow flexibility in the development of human rights education programs.

4. Human rights education in the classroom

- Teachers should be aware of the background of their students and need to develop a trusting relationship with them in order to be effective. The question of the power relationship between teachers and students should be addressed.
- Classroom/school management should ensure that a human rights culture prevails in the classroom/school in support of human rights education.
- Classroom human rights educational materials should be user-friendly.
- United Nations agencies should provide adequate assistance to states in the compilation of “best practices” in teaching methodologies.
- A catalogue of appropriate creative methodologies for use in the classroom should be produced in cooperation with NGOs, research centers and relevant specialists, and widely disseminated to teachers.